

# THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #95, November 1 - 30, 2006 A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE



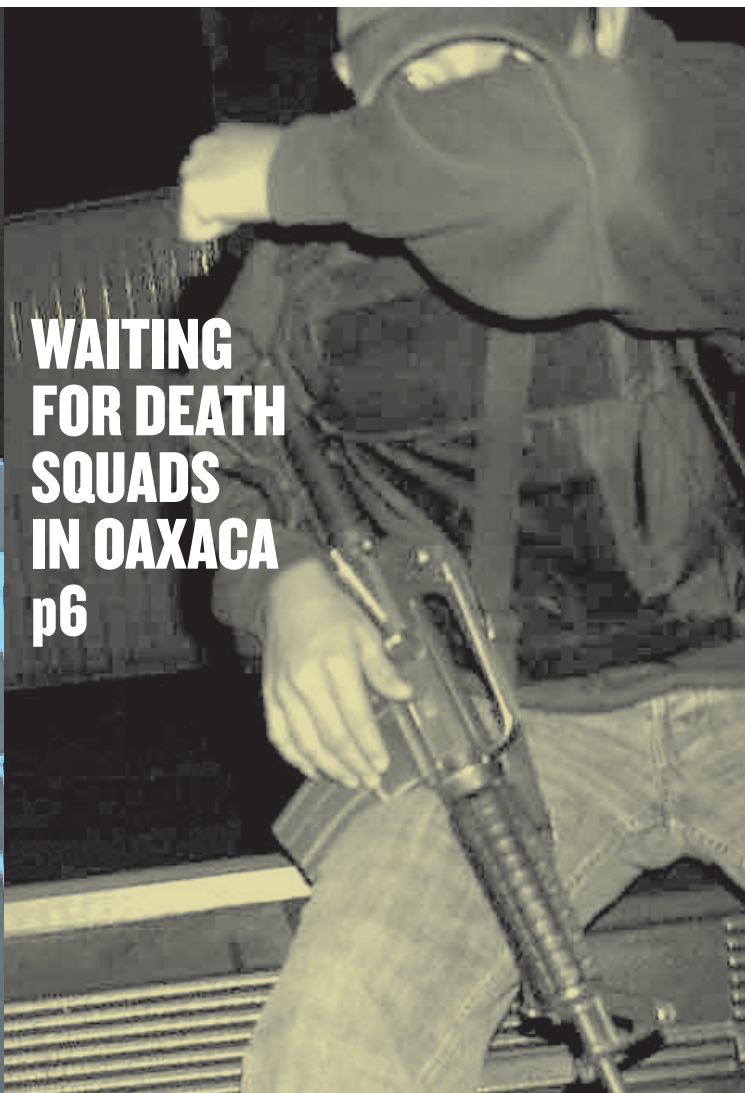
REMEMBERING  
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PAGES 8-11

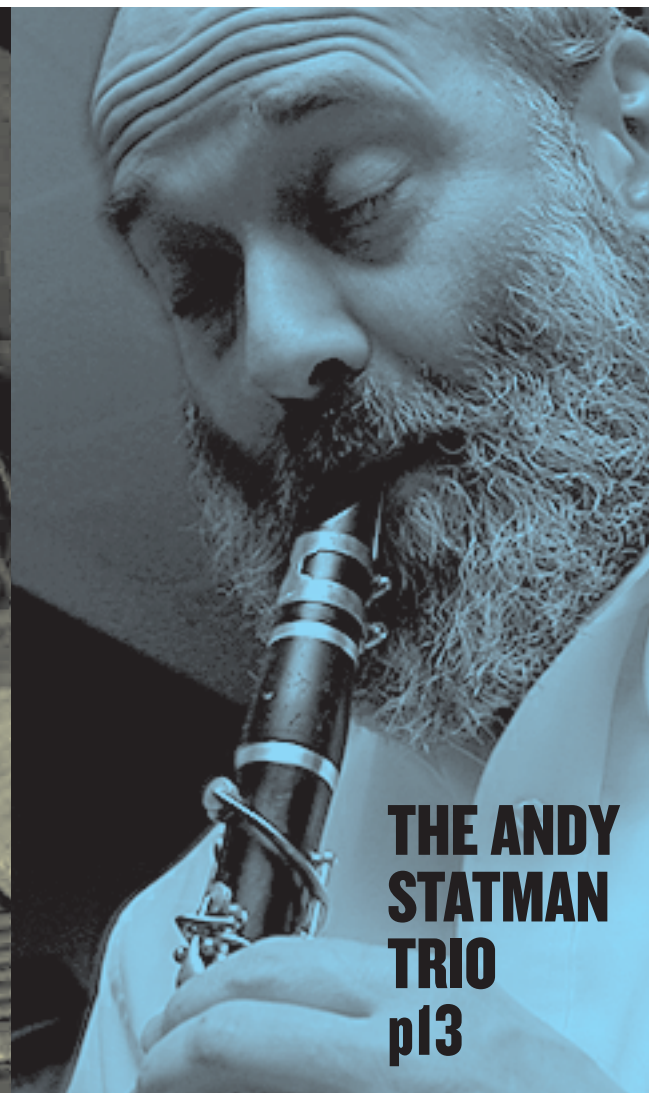
## Death of a Journalist



TRANSIT  
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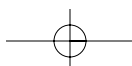


WAITING  
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## NEW YORK CITY INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER

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### WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 150 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

*The Independent* is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write and distribute for *The Independent*, video-tape events and rallies, update the website, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

### VOLUNTEER STAFF:

Nicholas Allanach, Chris Anderson, Steve Arnerich, Kazembe Balagun, Charlie Bass, Bennett J. Baumer, Leila Binder, Jed Brandt, Mike Burke, Jessie Carpenter, Antrim Caskey, Susan Chenelle, Orly Clergé, Ellen Davidson, Ryan Dunsmuir, David Ferris, Karen Fu, Leo Garcia, Neela Ghoshal, Lauren Giambone, Antonio Golan, Liana Grey, A.K. Gupta, Irina Ivanova, Ruth Kelton, Ula Kuras, Jessica Lee, Gary Martin, Diane Mason, Edgar Mata, Clark Merrefeld, Nik Moore, Mary Neglar, Ana Nogueira, Erica Patino, Donald Paneth, Nicholas Powers, Frank Reynoso, Ann Schneider, Andrew Stern, Sarah Stuteville, John Tarleton, Xavier Tayo, Erin Thompson, Chloe Tribich, Matthew Wasserman, Steven Wishnia & Amy Wolf

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

# november

### FRI NOV 3

7pm • \$5–7  
WORKSHOP: “CUNT LIBERATION.” W/Dohicky Collective in a playful workshop w/puppet show & discussion of how abortion struggles are linked to all other struggles, including battles for racial justice & gender liberation; reproductive parts & function; problems w/clinical abortion; and herbal alternatives. Bluestockings • 172 Allen St. • 212-777-6028 • www.bluestockings.com

7:30pm • \$8  
MUSIC/DISCUSSION: “FOLK THE VOTE! AN EVENING OF PROTEST SONG & POLITICAL ACTION.” w/Flames of Discontent, Dave Lippman (political satirist), Voices for Peace, Redwood Moose, Jay Wenk (WW II vet recently arrested for counter-recruitment protesting in Kingston). Backstage Studio Productions (BSP) 323 Wall St, Kingston, NY. 845-338-8700

### SAT NOV 4

noon–4pm • Free  
MARCH/RALLY: BRONX FAITH MARCH FOR CHILDREN. Bring attention to the needs of the children in the Bronx, the poorest urban county in the nation. Meet at St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church, 940 E 156th St. at Kelly St. Bronx; ends at the Bronx County Courthouse, Grand Concourse & 161st St. • 718-665-9073

8pm • \$12 gen/\$9 members sugg.  
POLITICAL SATIRE WITH DAVE LIPPMAN AND COMPELLING SONGS FROM JOHN FLYNN Peoples’ Voice Cafe, The Workmen’s Circle, 45 E 33rd St. • 212-787-3903 peoplesvoicecafe.org

### SUN NOV 5

4–5:30pm • Free  
ACTION: HOUSE PARTY FOR VOTING RIGHTS. Come and write letters to the Westchester Election Commissioners & ask them to protect the vote by choosing a machine w/an independent paper

ballot. Drinks & snacks. 111 Campfire Road, Chappaqua, NY. Kids welcome. • RSVP: Laura Porter, 914-238-6736

### MON NOV 6

4–6pm • Free  
RALLY: “AGAINST DEATH OF OUR CHILDREN’S EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS,” commemorating Black Solidarity Day 2006. Protest disappearing Black teachers, further privatizing of schools, banning of parental involvement, even more military recruitment & police in Black schools. Tweed Courthouse Dept of Ed Bldg. • 52 Chambers St. • 212-252-2997 • www.bnyee.org

### WED NOV 8

7pm • Free  
READING: “PARADIGM WARS: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ RESISTANCE TO GLOBALIZATION.” w/Jerry Mander (founder, Int’l Forum on Globalization) & Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (chair, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) Bluestockings • 172 Allen St. • 212-777-6028 • www.bluestockings.com

### THU NOV 9

7:30pm • Free  
TALK: “THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN TIME OF ELECTIONS & WAR” w/AMY GOODMAN. Judson Memorial Church • Washington Sq. South • 212-741-2994 • www.villagedemocrats.com

### FRI NOV 10

4 – 6pm • Free  
DISCUSSION: “POST-ELECTION MEXICO: ISSUES OF DEMOCRACY & REFORM” w/Christopher Sabatini (Americas Society), Laura Randall (Hunter College). CUNY Grad Center • Rm. C202/C203, 365 5th Ave. • RSVP at 212-817-2099 • bildner@gc.cuny.edu

7pm • FREE  
DISCUSSION/FILM: *HAITI: A GRASSROOTS REPORT* w/Yanick Etienne, Batay Ouvriye organizer from Haiti + documentary videos. Manhattan Theatre Club • 311 W 43rd St, 8th fl. • 718-284-0889 • info@grassrootshaiti.org • www.grass-rootshaiti.org

### SAT NOV 11

1:30pm Discussion, 3pm Action • Free  
DISCUSSION ON PALESTINE & THE U.S. BORDER WALLS: “STOP THE WALLS!” DRUM–Desis Rising Up & Moving teaches you how to take action against the apartheid walls in Occupied Palestine & between the U.S. & Mexico. After presentations, take it to the streets. Judson Memorial Church • Washington Sq. South • justiceME@gmail.com • www.mideastjustice.org

### TUE NOV 14

6:30 – 8pm • Free  
DISCUSSION: “THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS EVOLVES (AGAIN): HOW NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN PREVENTION RESEARCH MAY CHANGE THE WAY WE DO AIDS WORK.” LGBT Community Center 208 W 13th St. sonny@champnetwork.org, www.champ-network.org

### THU NOV 16

7pm • Free  
DISCUSSION: “VOICES IN WAR: THE ARTISTS’ PERSPECTIVE.” For members of the School of Visual Arts community & Veterans for Peace & their families. School of Visual Arts, 209 E 23 St. Rm. 502

### WED NOV 17

7pm • Free  
DISCUSSION: SOLDIERS WHO ORGANIZED AGAINST THE WAR How civilian antiwar activists can support and catalyze antiwar work within the military. Now, in one of the deadliest months of the war since the invasion, it’s impossible to overstate the urgency of this task. Judson Church • 55 Washington Sq. South • RSVP: contact@militaryproject.org

### THU NOV 23

noon–? • Free  
ACTION: 37TH NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING. Join Native American activists, learn the real history of Thanksgiving, dedicate the day to Native American political prisoner Leonard Peltier. Coles’ Hill, Plymouth, MA • Buses from NYC: Int’l Action Center • 212-633-6646 • 617-232-5135 • uainendom@earthlink.net

### THU NOV 30

7pm • \$5 suggested  
TALK: “ISRAELI SOLDIER SPEAKS OUT ABOUT MILITARY OCCUPATION” W/Yehuda Shaul, former Israeli commander & platoon sergeant and current exec dir of “Breaking the Silence,” sharing his experiences of serving in Israeli military occupation of West Bank. Judson Memorial Church • Washington Sq. South • ryvkabz@gmail.com

### ONGOING OCT 18–NOV 18

Mon–Sat, 10am–5:30pm • Free  
FERNANDO BOTERO: Artist Botero transforms his customary gently rotund figures, presented with humanity and humor, into Abu Ghraib scenes of evil and inhumanity – one can only imagine at what cost to him. Marlborough Gallery • 40 West 57th St. (2nd Floor) • 212-541-4900 • www.marlboroughgallery.com

### NOV 6–NOV 17

Noon • Free  
DEMONSTRATION TO PROTEST THE PROPOSED TRANSGAS ENERGY’S 1100 MW POWER PLANT. This rally is one of many taking place in the U.S. and in 45 countries around the globe as part of the International Day of Climate Change. Intersection of Kent Avenue & N. 12th St., Bklyn.

### NOV 9–NOV 30

Opening reception: Nov 9 @ 7pm  
EXHIBIT: “REMEMBERING WHAT CARE FORGOT” A 2-part exhibition celebrating New Orleans culture & revival. Artists: Ida C Benedetto, Roger Benham, Kyle Bravo/Hot Iron Press, Christopher Cardinale, Pat Cassidy, Dave Crusoe, Ze daLuz ABC No Rio • 156 Rivington • 212-254-3697 • www.abcnorio.org

**>> VISIT  
WWW.INDYPENDENT.ORG  
TO COMMENT ON OUR  
ARTICLES! <<**

**NOTE: THE INDYPENDENT  
WILL RETURN TO ITS BI-  
WEEKLY PUBLISHING  
SCHEDULE IN JANUARY**

## THE INDY SWEEPS THE IPPIES

*The Independent* won 8 “Ippies” Oct. 27 at the  
Independent Press Association of New York’s annual awards dinner,  
the most of any paper in the city for the third consecutive year.

THE AWARD WINNERS WERE:

Sarah Stuteville: 1st Place Best Feature  
Chloe Tribich: 1st Place Best Editorial/Commentary  
Erin Thompson: 2nd Place Best Article on Labor Issues  
Peter Holderness: 2nd Place Best Photograph  
Ryan Dunsmuir: 2nd Place Best Overall Design  
Bennett Baumer: 3rd Place Best Article on Labor Issues  
Andrew Stern: 3rd Place Best Photo Essay

Sarah Stuteville: Honorable Mention Best Article on Immigrant Issues/Racial or Social Justice

*Publishing since 2000, The Independent is a not-for-profit, volunteer-based, collectively-run newspaper.*

*Weekly open meetings are held Tuesdays at 7 p.m. at our office at 4 W. 43rd St., Rm. 311.*

*Next meeting: Nov. 14. For more information, call 212-221-0521 or email imc-nyc-print@lists.indymedia.org.*



# Trouble on the Airwaves

## WBAI LISTENER NUMBERS DECLINE, FUND-RAISING EFFORTS INCREASE



Tajudeen of Africa Action is interviewed on WBAI-99.5 FM. The listener-sponsored station is reported to be in serious financial trouble. PHOTO BY: AFRICA ACTION

BY CHRIS ANDERSON

The vitriol spilled in the most recent WBAI Local Station Board (LSB) election campaigns has created one of the nastiest political contests north of New Jersey. But the continuing financial crisis at the venerable radical radio station threatens to overtake the plans of whomever wins the annual vote of the station’s membership.

Founded in New York City in 1960, WBAI’s 50,000-watt signal, found at 99.5 on the FM dial, has a potential audience of more than 20 million people in the tri-state area. In addition to New York, the station’s owner, Pacifica Foundation, operates high-powered FM stations in Berkeley, Los Angeles, Houston, and Washington, DC that can reach approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population, and rely on listener-contributors for the bulk of their funding.

The current elections for the Local Station Board are the latest in the series of political contests that emerged out of the conclusion of a long-running battle, waged throughout the 1990’s, to reclaim Pacifica Radio stations from a corporatizing leadership. Although hopes were high before the first WBAI experiment in listener democracy, in 2004, several ugly, racially charged elections have soured many former activists and created deep factional disputes at the station.

The disputed financial status of WBAI is only one of many items about which different sides disagree, but it is perhaps the most important current area of conflict. WBAI has perennially teetered on the edge of financial ruin, with accusations of falling listenership and fiscal mismanagement long having been used as weapons in the various factional battles over the station’s direction. The

Average  
Arbitron Share,  
Summer 2006 –  
Summer 2006:

<b>WBAI:</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<b>WPFW:</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>KPFT:</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<b>KPFA:</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>KPFK</b>	<b>0.4</b>

plain, hard numbers, however – obtained from several anonymous LSB members and from public documents – paint a depressing picture.

Carol Spooner, lead plaintiff in the Pacifica Listeners Lawsuit of 1999 and a former member of the Pacifica National Board, recently wrote in an email that “WBAI has been losing listeners and listener support since 2003. It currently cannot pay its bills and also cannot pay its share of Pacifica national programming and administrative expenses.” The station, she concluded, was “functionally bankrupt.”

Spooner’s email was part of a political document written in support of a LSB faction opposed to current WBAI station management, and the details of her message have been hotly disputed by other political elements within WBAI. Nevertheless, a review of WBAI financial statements lends credence to fears that WBAI is sinking under the weight of its expenses and declining listenership.

“Pacifica finances are not exactly clear so its difficult to say what exactly the story is at the station,” independent board member James Ross wryly notes.

Although representatives of the LSB faction more sympathetic to current station management, the Justice and Unity slate, did not return *The Independent’s* calls requesting comment, a Justice and Unity campaign document attributes the accusations of fiscal crisis to “board members ... [attempting] to slash the budget and thus the skeletal paid staff, and attack the staff’s union rights.” Justice and Unity’s campaign literature contends that the current board “raised thousands of dollars for the station, including the funds to launch the WBAI online audio archives, and recruited many new listeners and paid members through outreach at community events.”

Nevertheless, numbers obtained from current WBAI board members document a decline in listener membership. After peaking in the Fall of 2005, membership at WBAI has declined steadily until, in October, it stood at 16,600 members (an 11 percent decline from Fall 2004 and a 20 percent drop from fall 2005).

Coinciding with this membership decrease, the number of days spent fundraising at WBAI have steadily grown, from 72 in fiscal year 2002 to 93 in FY 2006 (a growth of 25 percent). At the same time, the average pledge income per day has plummeted, from \$33,806 per day in 2002 to \$25,350 in 2006. WBAI’s total days of on-air fundraising stand at double those of most other Pacifica radio stations – KPFT in Houston spends 52 days a year in pledge mode, while KPFA fundraises for 59 days.

We need to “examine our fundraising performance over the past few years and see what we’re doing well and what we’re not,” concludes Ross. “We have to come to an understanding of what we can get from our listeners in a year. We can’t keep relying on 90-plus days of funding. We need to spend less money, at least in the short-term.”



Karina Garcia leads protest against Minutemen. PHOTO: DENNIS W. HO

# Columbia Controversy Simmers

BY DAVID FERRIS

A month after Columbia University students unexpectedly shut down a speech by the anti-immigrant Minuteman Project on Oct. 4, the incident continues to draw waves of both criticism and support from across the country, adding fuel to the growing political clash regarding racism and U.S. immigration policies.

Columbia’s College Republicans invited Minuteman Project co-founder Jim Gilchrist to address a campus audience. The controversy over Gilchrist’s appearance swelled in the weeks leading up to the event, culminating in the disruption of his speech by students who jumped on stage and unrolled a banner reading “No one is illegal.” The act prompted a tug-of-war over the banner and a physical altercation, which within minutes, resulted in the cancellation of the rest of the event. Students have been strongly criticized for violating the free speech rights of the invited guests, although video evidence indicates that the protesters were not responsible for the violence.

The stage-rushers never called for the Minutemen to be banned from speaking at the university. “It’s not about what they’re saying, it’s what they’re doing,” said Karina Garcia, political chair of the Chicano Caucus at Columbia and one of the protest organizers. “We don’t have to wait until there are thousands of them on the border to realize they’re dangerous.”

Columbia has received significant outside pressure to punish the students severely and has delivered official letters to several students involved in the protest indicating that it may bring disciplinary charges against them. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has openly questioned Columbia President Lee Bollinger on his commitment to the First Amendment and Gilchrist has threatened to file a lawsuit for alleged civil rights violations.

The intense press coverage has also provoked an outpouring of support from students across the country and represents the potential for a national student movement against the Minutemen in particular and for immigrant rights in general. “Regardless of how the media has vilified us, this is an opportunity to expose them,” said Garcia, who received thousands of letters of support after Gilchrist abruptly walked out of a nationally broadcast debate with her on *Democracy Now!*

## COUNTER-RECRUITING: Turn On, Tune In, Opt Out

Connie Norgren hands out Opt-Out forms as a military recruiter stands nearby at the entrance to Fort Hamilton High School at the intersection of 85th Street and Narrows Avenue on Parent Teacher Conference Night on Thursday, October 26, 2006.

PHOTO: DENNIS W. HO





# South Bronx Resists New Jail

BY DAVID FERRIS

Plans for a new South Bronx prison to replace old facilities on Rikers Island has sparked resistance from a community that does not want a jail built in its backyard, or anywhere else in New York City.

Although the prison plans are still in the preliminary stages, community activists in Hunts Point, where the jail is to be built, are already mobilizing to dissuade the NYC Department of Corrections from the project. A boisterous Oct. 23 town hall meeting hinted at the potential heated conflict that may arise over the issue. Residents and local activists were unequivocal in their opposition to the new facility, ending the meeting with chants of “No more jails!”

The resistance is being headed by Community in Unity, a coalition of fifteen Bronx community organizations, that is demanding transparency and accountability in the planning process and alternatives to the proposed 2,000-bed facility. “From day one, the city has not been forthcoming,” said Leah Gitter of Rights for Imprisoned People with Psychiatric Disabilities (RIPPD). “The City wants to spend taxpayer money to build a jail in our own backyard, but they haven’t told us a thing about it.”

NYC Department of Corrections Commissioner Martin Horn insisted that the City and the Department have remained committed to public openness. “We have tried to be transparent,” Horn said. He added that he had previously met with elected officials and Bronx organizations, prompting murmurs of skepticism from some of those in attendance.

Many in attendance strongly questioned the societal value of building another jail. The Department of Corrections insisted that a new jail is needed to replace aging facilities on Rikers Island, and has preliminarily budgeted \$375 million for a new facility to be constructed on a 28-acre Oak Point site in the Hunts Point neighborhood.

Horn argued that the Rikers Island buildings are severely outdated and, due to their two levels of security checkpoints and inconvenient location, make prisoners less accessible to visitors, attorneys, and community support providers. He added that the plan would ultimately reduce city jail capacity by 2,000 beds, a fact that Maggie Williams of the Bronx Defenders proved was misleading after she confronted him with a document publicly released by his own department. She noted that many of the existing beds in city jails have already been decommissioned and are unused.

Although Horn noted that the new prison represented a positive step for criminal justice in the city, as it would foster inmates’ contact with the community, the position found little support amongst residents who claim much less faith in the prison system. Some residents stated that resistance is not a “Not in my backyard” movement, but rather a “Not in anyone’s backyard movement.”

Hunts Point resident Rodrigo “Rodstarz” Venegas, a 25-year-old activist and hip-hop artist, said he is against any new prison. “I’m well aware that my age group – young Latino men – will be the target population to fill up that prison. We have to be aware that this is a prison industry that is close to modern-day slavery.”

A member of Critical Resistance, which organizes against the prison industrial complex, pushed alternatives to incarceration such as education, affordable housing, job training, and drug rehabilitation programs.

During the meeting Horn appeared frustrated by the persistent and vocal opposition expressed by the attendees. In a follow-up interview he stated, “If people’s minds are made up, then I’m wasting my time.” However, he added a promise to “Meet with anyone, anywhere, anytime.”

Despite the antagonism surrounding the issue, some feel there are shades of promise. “This is a real opportunity. They are going to bulldoze the facilities [on Rikers Island] and that’s great,” said Williams despite her opposition to the Oak Point prison.

# The Vigil



ABOVE: Dr. Les Roberts of John Hopkins University, co-author of a controversial new study on Iraqi public health speaks at St. John the Divine Church on Oct. 30. Recently published in *The Lancet*, the study estimates that 655,000 Iraqis have been killed since the war began in 2003. According to the study, the U.S. and its allies are responsible for 200,000 deaths. PHOTO: DENNIS W. HO

RIGHT: Jim Klicker puts a human face on the Iraq war during a daily vigil at Washington Square Park from 5:30 – 6:30pm. PHOTO: ULA KURAS

BY ULA KURAS

Stretching along the north end of Washington Square Park is the scene of a massive car wreck, part of a set for an upcoming Will Smith film. Standing among the flurry of attention the set has drawn, Jim Klicker and Eleanor Preiss in their designated spot under the arch, hold an anti-Iraq war placard, with quiet resolution.

“I’m here to break the silence – to articulate people’s rejection of the war,” Klicker said.

For the past two years, Klicker, 50, a member of the War Resisters League, has held a daily vigil from 5:30 to 6:30pm to protest the ongoing war in Iraq, while a steady stream of passers by stop to stare, sometimes approach him, often continue walking ahead, or on occasion join the vigil.

“I asked what can I do to help and they said ‘here, pick up a sign,’” said Andrew Lewczuk, an 18-year-old student from Pace who joined a Saturday evening vigil.

A few minutes later Alex Ducruet, a 16-year-old high school student walking by in the area joined the group. “I don’t like war. I’m against this,” he said pointing to the large photograph he was holding of a wounded Iraqi.

Klicker, a former software engineer at Coherent Medical Group, is a co-organizer of the Fallujah Witness Vigil that began on Nov. 8, 2004 in response to the intensified attacks on Fallujah while the city was under siege by U.S.-led forces. Message boards circulated on the internet calling to assemble at the park on a nightly basis until the attacks ended. Two years later, Fallujah and the rest of Iraq are still occupied and Klicker remains a daily presence.

“There is no active peace movement, an absence of an open, organized movement. It’s important to be here. I’m middle-aged. I don’t look too marginal. I make it seem respectable to



be part of a dissonance. People are more likely to be inspired to act,” Klicker said.

From victory signs and thank yous from students, tourists and an occasional veterans to sporadic jeers from passing drivers, Klicker has seen a variety of responses.

During the spring, Klicker was approached, after a prolonged exchange of hard stares and avoidance, by a former sergeant in Iraq who was part of the forward reconnaissance that identified targets to blow up on the field.

“Something happened there and he couldn’t talk about it without choking,” Klicker said. “He suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. He walked through the streets of Brooklyn because he couldn’t sleep. His vision of the war had completely changed.”

Eleanor Preiss of Brooklyn Parents for Peace has attended the vigil every other night since its onset. “I’m super consistent during the winter and reasonably good during the fall and spring. It seems more important in the winter; it’s more meaningful to be suffering a little in the winter,” Preiss said.

According to a study published on October 11 by public health scientists at Johns Hopkins and the University of Baghdad, more than 600,000 Iraqis (including both civilians and insurgents) have died as a result of the war, which translates to 2.5 percent of the population. This study yielded widely divergent results from the Iraq Body Count, a volunteer-run organization that tallies civilian deaths based on news media sources, which currently numbers civilian deaths at approximately 45,000.

Klicker has no intention of abandoning the vigil until the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

“This isn’t going to change policy but it affects people’s mentality. I never not wanted to show up. This is a good use of my time – a better use of my time. I like doing it,” Klicker said.

## WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT? A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

### BELOW 14<sup>TH</sup> ST.

**Bluestockings Books & Café**  
172 Allen St.

**Lotus Café**  
Clinton & Stanton Sts.

**6th St. Community Center**  
638 East 6th St.

**May Day Books Theater for the New City**  
155 First Ave.  
(Btw. 9th @ 10th Sts.)

**Housing Works**  
126 Crosby St.

**LGBT Center**  
213 W. 13th St.

**Shakespeare & Co. Books**  
1 Whitehall St.

**Brecht Forum**  
451 West St.

**14<sup>TH</sup> TO 96<sup>TH</sup> ST.**  
**Revolution Books**  
9 W. 19th St.

**Chelsea Sq. Diner**  
23rd St. @ 9th Ave.

**Domvys**  
413 W. 44th St.

**Second Wave Laundrocenter**  
55th St. & 9th Ave.

### ABOVE 96<sup>TH</sup> ST.

**Labyrinth Books**  
536 W. 112th St.

**Kim’s Video**  
113th St. @ Broadway

**Karrot**  
181st St. @ Cabrini

**BROOK-LYN**  
**BAM**  
30 Lafayette Ave.

**Vox Pop**  
1022 Cortelyou Rd.

**Tillie’s of Brooklyn**  
248 DeKalb Ave.

**Metropolitan Laundromat**  
561 Metropolitan Ave.

**El Loco Burrito**  
243 Bushwick Ave.

**Freddy’s Bar and Backroom**  
Dean St. & 6th Ave.

**Community Book Store**  
7th Ave. @ Carroll Sts.

**Tea Lounge**  
Union St. @ 7th Ave. 9th St. @ 7th Ave.

**Atlantis Super Laundry Center**  
472 Atlantic Ave.

**Photoplay Video**  
933 Manhattan Ave.

**Verb Cafe**  
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th

**Food for Thought Cafe**  
456 Nostrand Ave.

**Veggie Castle**  
2242 Church Ave.

**Make the Road by Walking**  
301 Grove St.

**Spoken Word Cafe**  
4th Ave. & Union St.

**YWCA**  
3rd Ave. @ Atlantic

### QUEENS

**Sunnyside Library**  
43-06 Greenpoint Ave.

**Broadway Library**  
4020 Broadway

**BRONX**  
**Bronx Museum**  
165th St. & Grand Concourse

**The Point**  
940 Garrison Ave.

Phone: 212-221-0521

Email: imc-nyc-print@lists.indymedia.org

For complete distro info: indypendent.org

**Baychester Library**  
2049 Asch Loop

### JERSEY CITY

**Five Corners Library**  
678 Newark Ave.

got a spot that’s hot for the Indy?



# Local 100 Washes Its Laundry

BY BENNETT BAUMER

Transit Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 washes their “laundry outside in public even before it’s dirty” – so says Local 100 president Roger Toussaint, alluding to his adversaries’ sniping in the upcoming union election. Toussaint is facing a barrage of attacks from the right and left flank of his union, as the union’s election turns into a referendum on last December’s strike and Toussaint’s leadership style.

Toussaint is running for re-election as the president of Local 100 on his decision to lead 36,000 willing transportation workers off the job in December 2005. Few in the mayor and governors’ office, Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and even the union itself thought there would be a strike. Not in this age of factory closings, disappearing pensions and soaring health care costs. But TWU Local 100 did strike.

At a recent forum on the strike, the union’s internal squabbles were on full display. Marty Goodman, a Vice President in the union, took the mic to berate union leadership for supporting Eliot Spitzer’s gubernatorial campaign and not getting a contract out of the strike. Goodman, a socialist, organized against the contract that the union first voted down by 7 votes and then ratified overwhelmingly months later. He contends the union demanded too little from the MTA and should have settled for no less than a 30 percent pay raise over three years – an exorbitant demand in today’s bargaining climate. Goodman rightfully criticizes Toussaint’s tight grip on the local’s operation. He is supported by many former New Directions allies who bristle at Toussaint’s take-charge attitude.

Born in Trinidad, Toussaint came of age in radical student movements and was expelled from school in his home country for spray-painting “Free Education Means Free Books.” After immigrating in 1974, he joined the TWU as a track cleaner a decade later. In 2004, Toussaint was elected on the New Directions slate that came forth from the socialist Solidarity union movement. The 2005 contract Toussaint negotiated contained 10.5-percent raises over three years, maternity stipends, paid MLK Day holiday, higher assault pay for conductors and operators and a pension refund for nearly two-thirds of the union’s membership. The stickler was the 1.5 percent membership contribution to the health care fund that Toussaint’s enemies seized upon to reject the first contract vote and try and oust him from leadership.

“I voted enthusiastically to strike, but I was against going back in,” said Goodman. His position is that the union should have held out longer until the members obtained a contract and received amnesty from the Taylor laws that penalize public employees for striking. “We are headed to binding arbitration with no fight back, it’s a disgrace to the labor movement.”

To the left of Goodman is the Trotskyite newspaper *Revolutionary Transit Worker*, produced by Eric Josephson, a track-maintenance worker and union steward. While fetishizing worker militancy, the newsletter assails Toussaint and even the opposition candidates, including Goodman, for not

being radical enough, and argues for broad revolutionary action.

“We came so close to striking so many times but we’ve been held back from fighting,” said Josephson of union leadership.

### STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

At first glance Goodman and Josephson appear to be what the labor movement needs: principled rabble-rousers not afraid to take on union leadership and the MTA, but a closer look reveals contradictions. For all his radical rhetoric, Goodman allied himself against the contract with a far more conservative Ainsley Stewart, who voted against the strike, and John Mooney, an Independence party leader and supporter of Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Running for the local’s executive board as an independent, Goodman referred to Stewart and Mooney as “beautiful guys, but I do have my disagreements.”

*The Revolutionary Transit Worker* is oppositional for opposition’s sake. The newsletter muddles its revolutionary line criticizing Toussaint for his leadership during the strike but is then “prepared to cooperate against the bosses” with TWU leaders like Barry Roberts who were against striking, leaving TWU members with no viable leadership choices.

Toussaint’s other challengers include union vice presidents Ainsley Stewart and Barry Roberts who vacillate on their positions on the strike and contract. Both Stewart and Roberts voted against going on strike and are inconsistent on their support and opposition for the contract. A little-known independent candidate is also running.

“I wasn’t against the strike, but I voted against the strike,” said Stewart. He then said that, if elected, he would “mobilize the members for a strike” in order to obtain a fair contract. Though he stopped short of saying he supported Republicans, he criticized Toussaint for his support of recent Democratic candidates for mayor (Freddy Ferrer) and governor (Carl McCall).

On the second day of the strike, Barry Roberts and 22 other officials of the Local 100’s 6,000-member bus division signed a petition favoring a quick resolution with the MTA. The bus division in Manhattan and Bronx entered the MTA and TWU in the 1960s and at times has seen itself as different from the rest of transit workers. The petition concluded that the strikers’ “resolve is starting to wear thin,” contradicting wide reports of boisterous picket lines in the cold week before Christmas. But only Roberts and his cohorts had cold feet.

In the Sept. 28 *Amsterdam News*, Roberts flip-flopped and said ending the strike was a “grave error” that “destroyed the workers’ morale.” Roberts is the favored candidate of former TWU International presidents Sonny Hall and Michael O’Brien, both long opposed to Local 100 militancy. Though leaders from other unions were reluctant to enter the trenches with Local 100, International president O’Brien was the only national labor official to openly advocate for Local 100 members to break the strike and scab their own union.

“The MTA wants one lesson to be taught – striking is bad,” said John Paul, a bus operator at Jackie Gleason Depot in Brooklyn. who is running to chair the Brooklyn bus division.



PHOTO: ANTRIM CASKEY

## TRANSIT STRIKE IN STORE? Meet the strikers, scabs and flip-flopers

### Roger Toussaint

While the election is a referendum over the strike, Toussaint’s leadership style is also in sharp focus. Toussaint’s enemies do not hold back their anger and disgust, and the personal is very much the political. If Toussaint wins, his influence over the local will be cemented, but Toussaint’s sway could also reach into the ever-adversarial international TWU as well.

### Eric Josephson

With his paper, *Revolution Transit Worker* Josephson has a platform, but no real base within the union. “[Toussaint] struck, he went to jail, and now he’s supporting that no good son of a bitch Spitzer.”

### Ainsley Stewart & John Mooney

They made a name for themselves in the Vote No campaign against the contract and are seen as close to socialist Marty Goodman. Stewart’s problem: the membership may remember he voted against going on strike and his contradictory positions. “I didn’t trust Toussaint coming back without a contract. I abstained on coming back [from the strike].”

### Marty Goodman

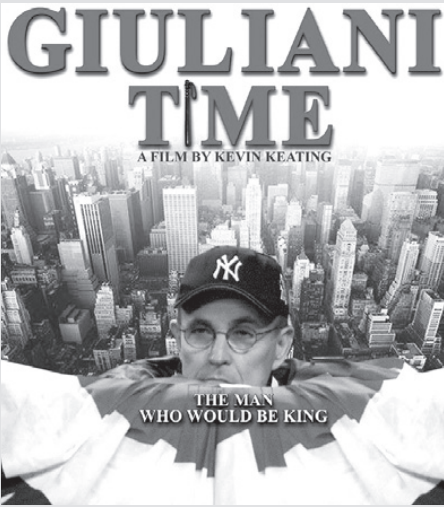
Goodman feels purged from Toussaint’s camp and rails against progressive support of Toussaint, such as Juan Gonzalez, and distrusts the “spin out of the union hall by high priced P.R. officials.” Goodman says union leadership views him as though he’s from “another planet.”

### Barry Roberts

He has partnered with former Toussaint ally, John Samuelson, who was angered over being booted from his staff job. Roberts may mount the toughest competition to Toussaint, though his role in the petition to end the strike will turn off many transit workers.

—BENNETT BAUMER

*The Wolfson Center for National Affairs presents*



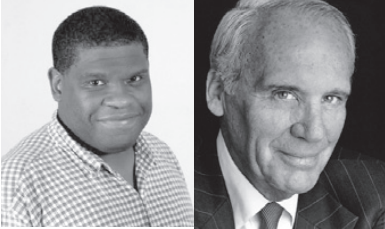
**THURSDAY  
NOVEMBER 9**  
6PM WOLLMAN HALL  
ADMISSION: \$5

After 9/11, Giuliani became known as “America’s Mayor” but what policies and practices did his several terms in office actually produce? The film is followed by a discussion about the former mayor and his present role in American politics with director, Kevin Keating and Fred Siegel, author of *The Prince of The City: Giuliani, New York*, and *The Genius of American Life*.

*The New School and The New Press present*

**FRIDAY  
NOVEMBER 10**  
6:30PM TISHMAN AUDITORIUM  
ADMISSION: \$8

Now that the midterm elections have passed, what will really change? Few people have any illusions that the Democratic party represents a true opposition force in American politics. Join columnists Gary Younge of *The Guardian* and author of *Stranger in a Strange Land: Encounters in the Disunited States*, and Lewis Lapham of *Harper’s* and author of *Pretensions to Empire: Notes on the Criminal Folly of the Bush Administration*, for a discussion about what it will take to create a real opposition movement in America today.



**AS OPPOSED  
TO WHAT?**

LEWIS LAPHAM AND GARY YOUNGE  
ON CREATING A REAL OPPOSITION  
FORCE IN AMERICAN POLITICS

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TICKETS: 212 229-5488 OR  
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# World briefs

## THOUSANDS OF U.S. WEAPONS MISSING IN IRAQ

Almost one in 25 weapons the U.S. provided to Iraqi security forces since 2003 are considered missing, according to a new U.S. Inspector General report released to Congress. The Associated Press reports that this amounts to more than 14,000 semiautomatic pistols, assault rifles, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and other weapons it began supplying to Iraq since the end of 2003. The report was requested by Sen. John Warner (R-Va), the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Pentagon acknowledged that it failed to register the serial numbers of approximately 360,000 weapons sent to Iraq.



MIAMI.INDYMEDIA.ORG

## MIAMI RESIDENTS TAKE OVER URBAN PUBLIC LAND

In response to a critical shortage of affordable housing in Miami, Florida, a group of organizations and individuals took control of city and county-owned land for the benefit of the people on Oct. 23, reported the Miami Independent Media Center. The 'Take Back the Land' movement, convened by the Center for Pan-African Development, took control of vacant land on the corner of 17th Ave. NW and 62nd St. in the Liberty City section without authorization. After a brief standoff with the Miami Police Department, officials acknowledged that the land was public and left. In the days following the land take-over, a “shanty town” was built. The Miami Community Relations Board (CRB) met with the group on Oct. 26 about several concerns, including that the “shanty town” was unsafe. Community members responded that the “shanty town” was safer than the nearby dilapidated apartment complex. The group pledges to not let the government take back the property.

## NEW YORK CITY

A judge issued a preliminary injunction barring the implementation of a bill sponsored by Gov. George Pataki to require formerly homeless HIV/AIDS patients receiving city housing subsidies to pay more of their income towards rent. The bill would hit the pocketbooks of some 2,200 HIV/AIDS tenants who would be forced to spend almost half of their incomes to pay the rent.

## LOS ANGELES

Renters organized by the housing organization Strategic Actions for a Just Economy sued a slumlord for conditions ranging from rat and cockroach infestation to dilapidated water pipes. The suit asks that the judge order the landlord to reside in the building to experience the poor conditions.

## COSTA RICA

Police carried out a mass eviction of slum dwellers near the coastal city of Heredia, Costa Rica. Government authorities bulldozed homes and left 67 families with no place to stay at night. Most of the residents of La Esperanza slum were Nicaraguan immigrants seeking better economic conditions.

## SOUTH AFRICA

Sparked by a spike in electricity charges, hundreds of Soweto residents took to the streets to march for better services in their sprawling neighborhood. Residents claim their municipal government turns a blind eye to poverty while police harassment has increased with eviction orders.



# Waiting for Oaxaca’s

*John Gibler began covering massive anti-government protests in the impoverished Mexican state of Oaxaca earlier this summer. As the movement grew, paramilitary death squads linked to embattled Gov. Ulisses Ruiz Ortiz began “softening up” protester barricades with the kind of hit-and-run attacks that would later claim the life of NYC Indymedia journalist Brad Will. In an eerily prophetic dispatch submitted to The Independent one day before Will’s murder, Gibler recounts an earlier experience he had with the perils and uncertainty of trying to cover the violent no-man’s land that Oaxaca’s capitol city had become.*

BY JOHN GIBLER

OAXACA DE JUAREZ, MEXICO—On Aug. 22, I came to the Fiesta Inn on the outskirts of Oaxaca on to catch a ride with the national press corps as they wound about the city looking for the death squads. The national reporters from Mexico City were all staying here as well as a local reporter with connections to the police chief.

These reporters knew the scene. They have the cars, and they have the serious cameras. At night my little camera is useless. The local reporter sitting next to me was working for a young hotshot journalist from one of the main national newspapers in Mexico City. This reporter, call him Rodrigo, went upstairs to his room to charge his cell phone and left me and the local correspondent, call him Andres, at the restaurant with an open tab. Andres refused to eat – he was on the receiving end of a club recently and had the taste of pain still on his tongue. He couldn’t sit still, couldn’t settle his gaze for more than a moment. He was smoking. He looked constantly up to the screen, around the room, out to the doors. He held two cellular phones, one in each hand. He knew what was going to happen; they told him.

## THE OAXACA UPRISING

Oaxaca had been in the grip of a bizarre, unarmed uprising for over 100 days. It started as an annual teachers’ strike demanding better wages and higher budget allotments for school repairs and student meals. Section 22 of the National Union of Education Workers has

been symbolically occupying the historic town square every year since 1980 in their struggle to bring greater federal and state funds to meet the education needs of one of the poorest states in the country. On June 14, for the first time in the 26-year history of the teacher’s movement, recently elected (or imposed, depending upon whom you ask) Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) sent over 1,000 state police to lift the teachers’ improvised tent city. The police stormed the sleeping teachers at 4 a.m., shooting tear gas grenades from helicopters and brutally beating men, women, and children with their truncheons. The police, however, did not do their math: the teachers’ union has 70,000 members, some 30,000 of whom were in Oaxaca for the protests. Within hours of the raid teachers and outraged local citizens took to the streets to defend those camped out in the town square. By midday they evicted the police with rocks, sticks, and Molotov cocktails. Since that day, not a single uniformed police officer had set foot in downtown Oaxaca City.

Throughout the rest of June and July the teachers – joined by hundreds of regional and statewide social justice organizations all grouped together in the Oaxaca People’s Assembly, or APPO – waged an increasingly intense campaign of mass, coordinated civil disobedience aimed at paralyzing the state government and forcing the resignation of Ruiz Ortiz. They cancelled the state’s largest tourism event, the Guelaguetza, blockaded all major state government buildings, including the capitol, forced Ruiz Ortiz and other

state officials underground, and took over the state television and radio station. The state government made no appearance, though thugs and gunmen began to pick movement leaders off the street and cart them off to prison and showed up at protests, first shooting into the air, and later into the crowds.

## CARAVAN OF DEATH

During the predawn hours of Aug. 22, a convoy of over 40 cars and trucks filled with both uniformed police and gunmen clad in black fatigues and ski masks, all brandishing pistols and AR-15 machine guns, cruised through Oaxaca de Juarez as part of the Governor’s officially dubbed “Operation Clean-up.” As they pulled off towards their first target – a local radio station occupied by protesters – gunmen in the last few trucks of the convoy shot at two newspaper photographers who had been taking pictures of the caravan. They missed, by inches. A few blocks away, they opened fire on protesters and killed one man, Lorenzo San Pablo Cervantes, a 52-year-old architect who had recently joined the protests helping to guard the radio stations. A cameraman with an international press agency told me: “On Monday I felt like I was in Africa or Haiti in drive-by shootings. It was fucking awesome.”

Earlier in the night, at 7:30 p.m., the restaurants and sidewalk cafes on the town square had begun to gather up their outdoor tables and draw metal doors down over their windows. “The police told us to close early, that they were going to come tonight,” one café manager told me.

“Who said this?” I asked.

He balked. “They called someone, everybody is closing. It is going to get dangerous.”

I saw Rodrigo and Andres at a café several blocks from the town square at around 9:30 p.m. They told me: it is coming. Tonight. Andres had been on the phone with the police chief. I sat down. Andres got a call for a last-minute press conference at the headquarters of the teachers’ union and we left Rodrigo typing his story to see what it was about.

The rumors had already run through most of downtown. The colonial cobblestone

>> The images were damning: this was a death squad.  
And these were the people who would come that night.  
But tonight, Andres has been told, there will be no holding back.

# Death Squads

streets were empty, the bars and restaurants all closed, and the only light came from the burning tires in the center of each intersection where the men, and a few women, with their long shadows guarded makeshift barricades assembled from scraps of sheet metal, stone, and wood. Every sound seemed suspect. The hard gunning of a motor. A sudden wave of barking dogs. Every sound, for a moment before its logic could be understood, seemed to signal imminent violence. Molotov cocktails, rocks, plastic water bottles filled with gasoline, and piles of tires were stockpiled on the sidewalk.

### “DON’T YOU FEEL SCARED?”

“Don’t you feel scared?” Andres asked me out of the blue as we walked down the street. I had heard rumors early on that Andres had connections with the police and thus never spent much time around him. He is a gregarious fellow, chummy and always cracking jokes, but I could not shake the distrust. A few weeks before, when protesters apprehended two plainclothes police officers that had threatened the family of one of the APPO leaders, Andres arrived on the scene asking questions without presenting his press credentials. Someone shouted: “he’s a cop!” Andres got scared and ran. One protester then clocked him on the back of the head with a club. Andres fell; people from the crowd kicked him repeatedly until someone stepped forward to call them back. Andres was taken to the hospital and released later that day. The APPO issued a formal apology, but apologies do little to uproot such a thrashing.

“No,” I said. “Perhaps luckily, or perhaps stupidly, I don’t feel scared.” Though I did feel somewhat ridiculous telling a man who had recently been beaten down by a mob that I didn’t feel afraid.

“Not me,” Andres said. “I don’t want to get into this stuff anymore.”

At the press conference we heard testimony from two teachers who suffered second-degree burns the night before when the police convoy pulled up alongside their car and tossed a Molotov cocktail in the front window. The man in the passenger seat immediately

opened his door and rolled out into the street to escape the flames. He had little skin left on his forehead and yet there he was in front of the local and national press denouncing what happened to him the night before.

We walked back to the café, now closing, and then headed off to the Fiesta Inn.

### AN INSIDE TIP

Andres had just hung up the phone moments before. Tonight the convoy would strike. He wanted to stay indoors, to stay away. They told him: don’t go out, there will be no holding back tonight and press badges won’t keep you safe. But Rodrigo wanted to see for himself what would happen. Rodrigo had been playing Andres’s police connections precisely so he could be at the right intersection at the right time and watch what went down. I was a parasite on this operation, sitting there waiting. I too was under the spell of wanting to be where no one should want to be.

As I saw it, the smackdown would happen whether I witnessed it or not, but if I witnessed it then I could write about it with some authority. There was no need to worry about tipping off the protesters; they already knew and will have organized barricades across the city to stop the convoy, with hundreds of barricades interrupting intersections, guards waiting in the shadows with gasoline, Molotov cocktails and clubs. We too were waiting, in a bright hotel restaurant, now looking up to the 11 o’clock news. Ivan Saldaña, the Televisa reporter who would give the report, was standing by a tree in the parking lot just beyond the front doors of the Fiesta Inn. Andres and I were at a table overlooking the empty lobby. We ordered nothing.

### THIS IS WHAT A DEATH SQUAD LOOKS LIKE

The news came on and we stood without a word and walked right under the television screen, looking up as if to a UFO arrival, necks cranked, eyes unblinking. Saldaña described the mood on the street and then cut to the report he put together on the events of the previous night.

We didn’t know what they would show. They showed the convoy of police and gunmen riding in pick-up trucks in the dead of night. They showed people running from gunshots. They showed the windshield of a newspaper photographer’s car with two bullet holes right above the steering wheel. They showed a camera placed on the hood of the car, the photographer’s hand on the camera and we heard his voice. He told of how the gunmen opened fire on him and another photographer after they had approached the convoy and taken pictures; how they hid behind a post and heard bullets hitting wood and stone around them. They showed the convoy on the move in the streets. Then they showed the convoy pulling into police barracks on the outskirts of town in the early dawn hours. They showed protesters, later that day, carrying the coffin of Lorenzo San Pablo Cervantes through the afternoon light and thousands of people in complete silence lining the streets with their fists raised in the air; they showed them carrying his coffin into the town square for a tribute.

The images were damning: this was a death squad. And these were the people who would come that night. But tonight, Andres has been told, there will be no holding back.

The news report finished and we returned to the table. I looked to Andres: “That was intense. I can’t believe they showed that on national television. This will be very damning for the Governor if the police carry out a major raid tonight.” Andres nodded, lit a cigarette, and then dialed a number on the cellular phone in his right hand. He called the chief. He mumbled, asked again, verified, and hung up. I did not understand a word. He looked at me: “They cancelled it; they aborted the operation.”

“Are you sure?”  
“That’s what he said. They cancelled it.”  
Andres called the waiter over and ordered a steak.

Later, when I saw Saldaña, I pat him on the back and said: “Hey, good report. I think you might have saved a few lives tonight.”



## On Storytelling and Remembrance

BY A.K. GUPTA

### How do you mourn a million deaths?

Human beings are all too adept at cataloguing and quantifying mass murder, but we are incapable of mourning collective loss. Mike Davis, writing about avian influenza in *The Monster at Our Door*, observes that some species of animals are capable of grieving for mass deaths, but not humans.

We need a reference point, an individual story. *The Killing Fields*, Dith Pran’s story of escape from the Khmer Rouge genocide, put a face on the deaths of up to 2 million Cambodians.

*The Diary of Anne Frank* made real the 11 million deaths of the Holocaust. One of the most affecting displays in the Holocaust Museum is the room with a jumble of shoes. It allows us to grasp the enormity of the murder when we see thousands of pairs of shoes, each one taken from a unique life, itself just a fraction of the total count.

The same technique is used to bring home the cost in American lives of the Iraq War, in the traveling “Eyes Wide Open” exhibit: A pair of combat boots is laid out for each U.S. death to date.

For the dead of September 11, makeshift memorials sprang up all over the city. *The New York Times*, in a monumental undertaking, published biographies of the nearly 3,000 dead.

But all deaths aren’t equal. There was little attempt by the government or media to account for the dead of New Orleans, who they were, how they lived, or even how many.

This is even truer of deaths in the Third World. Most newsworthy deaths in Latin America, Africa and Asia, those in dramatic conflict, pass unnoticed. It took the *Times* years to report on the tens of thousands of farmers in India who had committed suicide because of land debts they could never hope to pay back.

*continued on page 14*





TOP: Brad Will in Oaxaca shortly before his death. PHOTO: HINRICHSCHULTZ; MIDDLE: Brad's press pass; BOTTOM: residents of Oaxaca commemorate Day of the Dead (Nov. 1-2), leaving gifts at Brad's altar. PHOTO: JOHN GIBLER

what is indymedia?

Indymedia (indymedia.org) is a worldwide network of volunteer media activists based in more than 150 cities around the world that covers grassroots social justice movements. Launched in 1999, it has been on the frontlines of countless struggles that billion-dollar media conglomerates have ignored or marginalized. For this, scores of Indymedia journalists have been beaten, tear-gassed, jailed and shot at with rubber bullets while getting the story and sharing it freely with the world. And now, one of our own has been killed.

—JOHN TARLETON

# Mexican Paramilitaries Slay NYC Indymedia Journalist

BY INDYPENDENT STAFF

The repression began early on the morning of October 27 in Oaxaca, Mexico. Paramilitary forces linked to the local government kidnapped one local resident involved in the popular uprising. Gunmen shot at others. “We don't want to live like this anymore. We don't want to live in a constant state of repression, of blackmail, of murder and shabby deals,” a female protester in Oaxaca told NYC Indymedia journalist Brad Will.

Brad had traveled to Oaxaca to capture the voices of people like this at the center of a grassroots popular movement whose stories weren't being heard in the media. He arrived four weeks earlier to report on how striking teachers led a campaign to force out the corrupt local government and police and established the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca or APPO. On October 16, Brad wrote from Oaxaca: “What can you say about this movement – this revolutionary moment – you know it is building, growing, shaping – you can feel it – trying desperately for a direct democracy.” It turned out to be the last dispatch Brad ever filed.

On the afternoon of October 27, Brad

was murdered by paramilitary forces. He was shot twice in the abdomen as he filmed pro-government gunmen attacking a barricade on the outskirts of Oaxaca. His camera was in his hand. He was wearing an Indymedia t-shirt. On that day paramilitary forces also killed a teacher named Emilio Alonso Fabian and Esteban López Zurita, a Oaxaca resident. Eleven others were wounded and two disappeared.

Within 24 hours Mexican President Vicente Fox ordered 4,000 federal police into Oaxaca “to restore order.” They arrived on Oct. 29 backed by tanks, helicopters and water cannons. At least two people died in the initial siege. The Mexican government claimed the police had retaken the city but local residents said the police controlled little more than the city square.

While Fox used Brad's death as a pretext to invade Oaxaca, human rights activists across the globe have mobilized to condemn the ongoing repression in Oaxaca and Brad's death.

The Committee to Protect Journalists said it was shocked and outraged by his killing. Reporters Without Borders called for a federal investigation into Oaxaca State Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz's continued use of plain-clothed municipal

police as a political paramilitary force. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, a human rights expert at the United Nations, acknowledged receiving reports that Mexican paramilitary groups in Oaxaca were responsible for “the killing and wounding by gunfire of innocent victims, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, illegal searches and breaches of due process.”

No such criticism has come from Washington where President Bush is scheduled to meet with Mexican President-elect Felipe Calderon on Nov. 9.

The U.S. State Department has said it knows of no reports that any human rights violation occurred in Oaxaca. State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack said that there is no need to press the Mexican government to investigate Brad's death.

“[It] is really going to be up to the Mexican government to... deal with this,” McCormack said.

He also claimed the State Department is not aware that anyone linked to Will's death has been identified.

However the Mexican press has published a photograph taken at the scene showing the armed men. They have been identified as Pedro Carmona, Juan Carlos Soriano, Manuel Aguilar and Abel

Santiago Zárate – all local police officers or government officials.

Initially Mexican officials said the gunmen were detained but it has since emerged that no one had been arrested and that the men have disappeared.

Protests are continuing across the globe over Brad's death and the ongoing state repression in Oaxaca.

In New York, friends of Brad Will held an emergency vigil outside the Mexican Consulate 24 hours after his death. Two days later, on October 30, more than 200 activists returned to blockade the entrance to the Consulate. 12 people were arrested. The action was organized in response to a call from APPO. Protests were also held that day in 13 other U.S. cities. On Nov. 1, about 75 cyclists rode in a memorial bike ride to the Mexican Consulate (where they read out the names of murdered activists in Oaxaca) and the United Nations.

In Mexico, the Zapatistas responded to the repression on Nov. 1 by blocking three major highways in Mexico in solidarity with the people in Oaxaca. The Zapatistas called for a nation-wide shut down on Nov. 20.

A public memorial for Brad Will is scheduled for Nov. 11 from 1-5 p.m. at St. Marks Church.

# Brad Will 1970–2006 ¡presente!

## “One more martyr in a dirty war – One more time to cry and hurt.”

BY BRAD WILL,  
EARLY DAWN, OCT16

yesterday i went for a walk with the good people of oaxaca – was walking all day really – in the afternoon they showed me where the bullets hit the wall – they numbered the ones they could reach – it reminded me of the doorway of amadou diallos home – but here the graffiti was there before the shooting began – one bullet they didnt number was still in his head – he was 41 years old – alejandro garcia hernandez – at the neighborhood barricade every night – that night he came out to join his wife and sons to let an ambulance through – then a pickup tried to follow – he took their bullet when he told them they could not pass – they never did – these military men in civilian dress shot their way out of there

a young man who wanted to only be called marco was with them when the shooting happened – a bullet passed through his shoulder – he was clearly in shock when we met – 19 years old – said he hadnt told his parents yet – said he had been at the barricade every night – said he was going back as soon as the wound closed – absolutely

just days before there was a delegation

of senators visiting to determine the ungovernability of the state – they got a taste – the call went out to shut down the rest of the government – dozens went walking out of the zocalo city center with big sticks and a box full of spray paint – they took control of 3 city buses and went around the city all morning visiting local government buildings and informing them that that they were closed – and we appreciate your voluntary cooperation – and they filed out preturbed but still getting paid – shut – as they pulled away from the last stop 3 gunmen came out and started shooting – 2 buses had already pulled away – mayhem – 10 minute battle with stones and slingshots and screaming – one headwound – another through the leg – made their way to the hospital while the fighting continued – shout out on the radio and people came from all parts – the gunmen were around the side of the building – they got away – they were inside – no one sure – watchful – undercover police were reported lurking around the hospital and folks went running to stand watch over the wounded

what can you say about this movement – this revolutionary moment – you know it is building, growing, shaping – you can feel it – trying desperately for a

direct democracy – in november appo will have a state wide conference for the formation of a state wide asamblea estatal del pueblo de oaxaca (aepo) – now there are 11 of 33 states in mexico that have declared formation of asamblea populares like appo – and on la otra lado in the usa a few – the marines have returned to sea even though the federal police who ravaged atenco remain close by – the new encampment in mexico has begun a hunger strike – the senate can expel URO – whats next nobodies sure – it is a point of light pressed through glass – ready to burn or show the way – it is clear that this is more than a strike, more than expulsion of a governor, more than a blockade, more than a coalition of fragments – it is a genuine peoples revolt – and after decades of pri rule by bribe, fraud, and bullet the people are tired – they call him the tyrant – they talk of destroying this authoritarianism – you cannot mistake the whisper of the lancandon jungle in the streets – in every street corner deciding together to hold – you see it their faces – indigenous, women, children – so brave – watchful at night – proud and resolute – went walking back from alejandros barricade with a group of supporters who

came from an outlying district a half hour away – went walking with angry folk on their way to the morgue – went inside and saw him – havent seen too many bodies in my life – eats you up – a stack of nameless corpses in the corner – about the number who had died – no refrigeration – the smell – they had to open his skull to pull the bullet out – walked back with him and his people

and now alejandro waits in the zocalo – like the others at their plantones – hes waiting for an impasse, a change, an exit, a way forward, a way out, a solution – waiting for the earth to shift and open – waiting for november when he can sit with his loved ones on the day of the dead and share food and drink and a song – waiting for the plaza to turn itself over to him and burst – he will only wait until morning but tonight he is waiting for the governor and his lot to never come back – one more death – one more martyr in a dirty war – one more time to cry and hurt – one more time to know power and its ugly head – one more bullet cracks the night – one more night at the barricades – some keep the fires – others curl up and sleep – but all of them are with him as he rests one last night at his watch.

# BRAD WILL'S REMARKABLE LIFE

BY JOHN TARLETON



TOP: Brad Will plays with a small friend of his. BOTTOM: Brandon Jourdan of the NYC Indymedia video team honors Will's memory on Oct. 30 by performing a die-in in front of the Mexican Consulate. PHOTO: FREDASKEW.COM

Brad Will was someone who seemed to be everywhere.

Most knew him as an Indymedia activist, but he was also a passionate environmentalist, freedom fighter, musician, and anarchist who was also close to the Earth First! movement where he was a beloved character by many. Here are some of the campaigns he was involved in:

**STEAL THIS RADIO 88.7 FM** – Brad was an active participant in this irrepressible Lower East Side pirate radio station that defied the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and helped spark a movement that culminated in 2000 when the Clinton Administration reversed itself and began granting Low Power FM broadcasting licenses to hundreds of community groups around the country.

**SQUATTING** – Brad was a part of a movement that turned abandoned buildings on the Lower East Side into free housing. With squatters already under siege from the Giuliani administration by the time he moved to New York in 1995, Brad stunned his fellow squatters in Feb. 1997 when he snuck back into an East 5th Street squat and emerged atop the roof to try and stop a giant wrecking ball which had begun battering the building.

**FOREST DEFENSE** – Freight hopping and dumpster diving back and forth across the country, Brad hooks up with old-growth forest defenders in Oregon. The forest defenders used an innovative range of innovative direct action techniques including “locking down” to blockade logging roads and “tree-sitting.” Will once conducted a tree sit while living in a helicopter cargo net dangling 200 feet up in the canopy of giant Douglas firs and hemlocks

**COMMUNITY GARDENS** – As Mayor Rudy Giuliani moved to wipe out hundreds of community gardens (see page 8) in the late '90s, Brad helped energize the community gardens movement by introducing non-violent direct action techniques learned in the Pacific Northwest. The More Gardens Coalition that Brad helped found would later migrate from the Lower East Side to the South Bronx to help mobilize community support for dozens of endangered gardens in Melrose Commons and Morrisania.

**BATTLE OF SEATTLE** – Experienced forest defenders like Brad train thousands in non-violent direct action and spearhead mass protests that shut down a World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle in November 1999. Images of police firing tear gas and rubber bullets into throngs of mostly youthful protesters speed around the world and help inspire a new generation of radical activists here in the United States.

**GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT** – Brad travels to Prague, Quebec City and Quito among other locales to participate in mass convergences against corporate-dominated trade summits and international financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. As he travels, he continues to develop a far-ranging network of friends and allies that enables him to immerse more deeply in the global justice movement, especially in Latin America. When he's in New York, he continues to actively participate in Food Not Bombs, Critical Mass bike rides and efforts to save community gardens in the South Bronx.

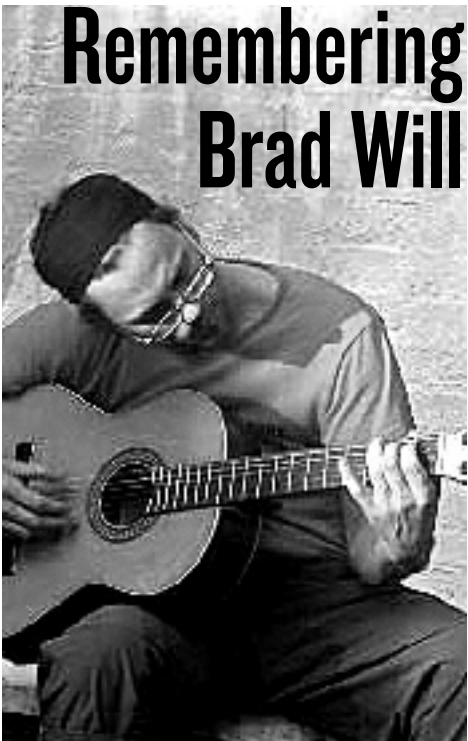
**INDYMEDIA** – Inspired by the Zapatistas and launched on the eve of the Seattle WTO protests, Indymedia's innovative self-publishing newswire inspires thousands of activists to “become the media.” Local Indymedia Centers quickly take root in over 100 cities on all six continents. In 2001, Brad becomes involved with the New York City chapter and contributes as a writer, photographer, videographer and audiographer.

**SOUTH AMERICA** – Brad makes his first extended trip to South America. Living on the outer edges of Buenos Aires, Argentina, he finds an economically-devastated populous organizing and mobilizing through neighborhood assemblies, factory takeovers, communal soup kitchens and more to regain control over their lives from the bottom up. Inspired by the militant, grassroots social justice movements that were flourishing throughout Latin America, he would return again and again to chronicle and share in the struggles of the oppressed in various countries including Bolivia, Ecuador and Brazil. In February 2005, he was nearly killed when Brazilian police violently raided an encampment of 12,000 landless squatters who had occupied an abandoned industrial park for nine months.

**GLOBAL WARMING** – Brad played a founding role this summer in the creation of Rising Tide North America, a decentralized network of groups and individuals organizing against the root causes of climate change.

**MEXICO** – In January 2006, Brad chronicles the first leg of the Zapatista's Other Campaign, a national listening tour that travels to the poorest and most exploited communities in Mexico and encourages them to organize “from below and to the left.” In June, striking teachers in the state of Oaxaca spark a popular revolt against an unpopular governor. Sensing the showdown in Oaxaca was heading toward a pivotal moment, Brad returns to southern Mexico at the beginning of October with a video camera in hand.





# Remembering Brad Will

Testimonials and tributes poured into the [nyc.indymedia.org](http://nyc.indymedia.org) website in the day's following Brad Will's death. Here are excerpts from a few of them:

by jenka

i haven't seen brad since i was last in new york.....at a protest, of course. he was at every protest, big or small, he "had" to be there. when i met him, we were part of a small group that determined to make new york indymedia a reality. we lived, breathed, sweated and slept indymedia. every second of our time was devoted to it....day and night, recording everything we could...brad....john tarleton, warcry, justin, madhava, ana, josh breitbart, arun, lee, ....devoting ourselves with such fury to the idea that 'all voices should be heard'. and brad was just about the most devoted devotee to that idea, that vision.

i hear his voice now, in my head, so matter-of-fact, so ready to face any

force...but not to be a hero! no! just because (hear brad's voice now), well hey, there are people being oppressed, so \_of Course\_ we're gonna stand up and be there with them. of Course we're gonna tell their story, capture their struggle on our cameras, broadcast their voices to the world. i mean, that's what any reasonable person would do in such a circumstance.

by Scott

I just saw Brad a few weeks ago. He came by our house and pissed me off when I caught him helping himself to my personal supply of olive salad & tahini from the fridge :) We travelled together briefly in South America and sat through more than our share of boring meetings in NYC. If I'd known I'd never see him again, I guess I would have bought him a beer and invited him to the rest of that olive salad.

## GREAT SADNESS AND MOURNING

Modern Pitung

The last time I spoke with Brad was all too brief, but touching. I was in a small but crowded group in Bluestockings Books, at a fundraiser for tsunami relief in Aceh. Being an Indonesian who was dissatisfied with the way leftists sought to simply ennoble the suffering Acehnese and Indonesians while asking no questions as to why it happened, I was impressed with how Brad seemed to know instinctually that we should question the official feel-good stories there. He seemed to feel, deep in his heart, that his purpose as a journalist wasn't to manufacture consent but to push dissent.

CARO BRAD

by toya

the solidarity was always with you, from the first time i met you in ny, u helped me get around in a different

country....we met many times in the struggles of the repressed ppl....I heard from you always questions of "how this can be more useful" u have always tried to be useful for the struggle..u always came to ask "what ppl needed"..and u tried your best to make it happen....everywhere, ny, ecuador, bolivia, argentina, brasil...last time we hanged out u asked me.....you were here in brasil, and asked "hey i still have some time here, tell me where should i go, where ppl need help"..and u went to goiania, to fight with the ppl from sonho real...your presence there were very important as your presence has been everywhere you went to and everywhere we will go to, cuz we will always take you with us to the barricades ;)

my thoughts are with you brad, with your glasses, ten thousand media press identification, the long hair...the same person who dedicated your life to our struggle and we will continue it...brad presente!

# Cultivating Hope:

BY BRAD WILL

“Here’s a story that you may not understand,  
but the parking lots will crack and bloom again.  
There’s a world beneath the pavement that will never end.  
Seeds are lying dormant, they will never end.”

—Songwriter Dana Lyons, “Willy Says”

In New York City in the 1970s, while the white flight flew and the city coffers choked up blood, a procession of torched buildings tumbled down, block after block, at the same time that firehouses were closed, trash services cut off, police retreated. These rubble-strewn lots were magnets for trash, rats, prostitution, drug dealing, dirty needles, hepatitis. The city’s only response was to spend thousands on fences. But then, something really amazing happened. Realizing the government was not interested in helping them, people took back their neighborhoods, one lot at a time. They cultivated unique community green spaces. They brought their homes with them: from the rural South to Harlem; from Puerto Rico to the Lower East Side; from Jamaica to East New York; from the Dominican Republic to the South Bronx. They disregarded property rights and did what was right for their neighbors. The story of the community gardens is thousands of stories. I can tell a few.

I moved to the big shitty as Giuliani-time kicked in. Hard times for the fiscally disinclined. Hardest of all for communities of color. Land under your feet grew more expensive by the minute — they still call it real estate, even under a garden. Down at the 5th Street squat, we cleared out the adjacent lot of rubble, junk carts, piss bottles and rot. We started a green space. The neighborhood kids ran wild between the fragile beds. The nuns from the Cabrini old folks home came across the street to praise our goodly green emergence. The year before, they were lobbying for our eviction. We turned the ghost fragments of rubble into elaborate brick walkways and stone-raised beds. I heard the tale of the cobblestones, cut in debtors’ prison in

England, used as ballast for the rough sea and dumped on the docks in exchange for old-growth white pines. They became streets, then were ripped up and poured black. We tried to set them right. Getting your hands in the soil is such a simple and human thing. You are moving contrary to the concrete.

A crew of us went out to the Liz Christy garden for the Green Guerrilla annual plant give-away. In the 1970s, the Green Guerrillas formed a band of night-time raiders, kick-starting the gardening movement with bolt cutters, trainings on appropriate trespass tactics, “seed bombs,” direct support. Natural allies. We cleaned house: a rickety wheelbarrow, shovels, dozens of plants and a compost bin. It took three trips to haul it away. We planted a row of bushes whose berries would attract birds and whose thorns doubled as security. We planted a pear tree for sweet Sammy the plumber who passed away. Never got to see it come to fruit.

When they came for our building there weren’t any eviction papers, and they came with a wrecking crane. I snuck inside, felt the rumble when the ball pierced the wall. I was alone. From the roof I watched them dump a chunk of my home on my garden. Everyone screaming from behind police lines. When it was all over: a rubble heap. And later, it returned to a junkie’s trash den.

I was feeling displaced. The good people at Chico Mendez Mural garden wanted to fight. I shared some Earth First! blockade techniques. It was a brand new confrontational stance for the gardeners. It became Fort Chico. Barricades went up. We had pre-dawn bike reconnaissance, patrolling for police mobilizations. Squatters from the Tompkins Square riot days dropped by. The city got nervous.

Chico Mendez Mural garden was a miracle. Neighbors dug in next to the most notorious crack house in the city — a tenement fortress dubbed “The Rock.” The kids with negligent parents were almost adopted by Agi, the garden saint. They didn’t understand when Don Garcia from Little Puerto Rico garden walked up to me on the stoop of a friend’s squat and offered to buy us beer. The next day I was in his beautiful garden where the sound of merengue charged the cool night air. This small liberated piece of land brought us together; I never thought I could set foot there, and I was welcomed as an honored guest.

The Angels’ garden had a little casita with old men playing dominos and drinking a bottle of rum. Maria’s garden had an intricate nuyorican (Puerto Rican New Yorker) shrine. A rooster called me as I biked past at the crack of dawn. All were destroyed one day before New Year’s 1999, when most were out of town. They were turned into government-subsidized condos. The developer, Donald Capoccia, showed up as the bulldozer finished off lovely Chico. About a dozen community members lunged with a volley of spit. The police turned the other way.

Rapid response. Activists chained themselves across a street during rush hour in front of the Manhattan Institute, the right-wing think tank that was the Frankenstein behind the Giuliani monster and had shaped the neoliberal policy sweeping the city. NAFTA for the South Bronx, bringing all of the five boroughs under the thumb of Wall Street wizards, making nothing out of nothing, and the bubble was yet to burst. People were making the connections.

It was a nonprofit shell game. They called them “blighted vacant lots.” Public-private partnership. And the spin was that they would be low-income housing, even though only 20 percent were lower than market rate, and only for ten years. After that they were sitting pretty. Gentrify your portfolio. And it is never enough.

Giuliani went for the jugular. No more pretense of “affordable” anything. “This is a free-market economy — welcome to the era after communism.” 119 gardens going to the auction block. This was an act of war.

“Even in this city where the  
shadows seem victorious,  
Sunflowers stand tall and put  
them all to shame.”

—Songwriter Casey Neil, “Emma’s Garden”

In a green space between the towering dark projects in the South Bronx, the More Gardens! Coalition was formed. Gardeners, squatters and young activists changed the language of the struggle. Sharing food cooked over an open fire, we strategized a fresh mix of direct action (with puppets) and lobbying with love for the land.

The smell of garlic, greens and tomatillos in an old squat. A gang of friends making puppets by candlelight. Standing in a circle for the solstice. We were a new communication of dissent. Proactive element — not only protection, but extension of green space. We fought before the execution was imminent. We brought the gardeners together to decide for themselves what to do.

Talking democracy while walking to the hearings at City Hall. Whole classrooms coming downtown to tell the truth. We came dressed as flowers and bugs. My testimony was a song. Went to the gardeners on their block to gather information for the court battle. Helped get the court actions moving. Sweet escalation. I stole a kiss in the paddy wagon leaving city hall, and when they lined us up, boys versus girls, we did the hokey-pokey at the station house. The cops were impressed.

Training folks to sit down and get busted for the first time. I got hauled away with granny gardeners and a preacher. And still that day was coming. We came at them from all sides. Actions in their offices, up in a tree, down in their courthouse with a lawyer playing for real. One sister compiled all the information needed for a court challenge against the auction and, dressed like a sunflower, delivered it to State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer in Albany.

I stumbled out of jail, dreary-eyed at dawn, and stumbled to another rally to support the legal battle at the federal courthouse. They raised the money for my fine on the spot. Just days to go. Right down to the wire with many interesting plans for the auction and a photo finish. The mayor conceded defeat.



By jlaw

i met brad a few years back in buenos aires. a huge prison built by the 1976 dictatorship towered over my neighborhood. one of my last nights there, brad and i went out and redecorated it with stencils and messages of hope. the argentine call to arms “¡que se vayan todos!” still rings true.

By Lucy

Brad's most successful campaign was his own life. No one needed to tell him to “actualize his desires” because his compass was always firmly rooted in his own heart. He pursued his desires like there were no other options; alienation was an abstract concept to him. He never hesitated, and I admired him for this tremendously. This impulse also put him in danger, but he lived and died like a hero. We should all be so lucky to do the same. I am forever indebted to Brad for reminding me, directly and by exam-

ple, that we are all complicit in our own oppression. His life provided an example of the alternative.

BRAD ON THE ROOF OF 5TH ST. SQUAT

By Fran Luck

I met Brad as part of the squatter movement on the Lower East Side and loved him as a brother as we fought the gentrifiers, city bureaucrats and even neighborhood housing associations who were to get the squatters out of the abandoned buildings they were making into communities. In the early 90's Brad and many others were living in a longtime squat on East 5th St. which they had made into a beautiful and political home and gathering place. Other forces wanted that buid-ing and there was a “mysterious fire”- -a small one--that was used as an excuse to order this considerable community to leave the building without

even being allowed to take their pos-sessions or save their animals. An order for a bulldozer was quickly granted by the city. As the bulldozing was about to start and a crowd stood on the street helplessly watching, a lone figure appeared on the roof of the building--refusing to leave and risking his life to make that statement (the building could have been easily bull-dozed with him in it--followed by a claim that they ‘didn’t know’). A cheer went up. Somebody had defied the insane and brutal eviction. It was Brad.

The image of his tall figure walking back and forth on that roof and defying the pig-landlord city government was burned into everyone’s mind. There are many photos of it. It was a signal of hope even in that desperate and grief-stricken moment. Brad was clearly and consciously risking his life for his principles then--just as he was doing in Oaxaca. He was that kind of person. The very best of us.

Compiled from nyc.indymedia.org.



THE COMMUNITY GARDENS OF NEW YORK CITY

May 1999. Every garden on the auction pro-tected. He should have known better.

EL JARDÍN DE LA ESPERANZA

There is a myth in Puerto Rico. A monster approaches the forest intending to destroy it. The tiny thumbnail-sized coqui tree frog steps up and is able to scare away the monster with the loudness of its voice. This was the perfect analogy for a community facing off against bulldozers.

Alicia Torres, a saintly grandma, came from the embattled island of Vieques, Puerto Rico, and started El Jardín de la Esperanza (The Garden of Hope) in 1977. Across the street there was a line down the block for the dope shop for years. It took the Drug Enforcement Agency with machine guns to put an end to it. But the Torres family just kept digging, clearing out their lot and building up a casita through it all. They grew medicinal plants for healing teas. A 22-year-old rosebush, and lots of changes in the ‘hood. But there was a plan to destroy hope.

Doña Alicia talked to the plants and prayed for them. She even prayed for the developer, that he would have a change of heart. With the go-ahead from Doña Alicia, we started a full time encampment. We built a giant coqui guardian in the front of the garden, with room inside for three to sleep, raised up ten feet with window watchtower eyes and concrete-sealed lock-boxes. In the back of the garden rose a 26-foot sunflower made of steel with a lock-box on top, nested between the petals, which read: “Esperanza/Hope, Lindo/Beauty, Comunidad/Community, Oxygeno/Oxygen, Comida/Food.”

We recycled Christmas trees to feed the fire and pitched tents to stay warm as winter drove in hard. They always come in winter. Our day in court had come, and Giuliani sent in his troops to steal it. We had 12 hours notice. Over a hundred people gathered. We filled the lock-downs that were on the fence and buried in the ground. We sang to gather strength. Dawn came quickly, with the special Emergency Service gestapo cutting open the front fence. A sudden surge of police. Yelling, scrambling, friends dragged away. Soon the taste of burning steel close to my lips, and a burn on my wrist. I asked the cop if he was going to tell his kids what he did today. He didn’t answer. On the other side of town, the state attorney general was arguing

a case that would put a temporary restraining order (TRO) on the destruction of any garden in the city. We held on to the ground. The TRO came 40 minutes too late. But it pro-tected all of the gardens in the city, for the time being. When asked why he took the case, Spitzer said, “A sunflower asked me to.”

In Washington, D.C., we inspired actions during the World Bank meetings. The A16 Guerrilla Gardening Collective hit the streets armed with seedlings and kale seeds. These anarchists didn’t come to break windows, they came to break the ground.

May Day 2000. The kids in NYC Reclaim the Streets marched in solidarity with immi-grant workers, then broke off and beelined it for a neglected spot by the East River, where they pulled the chain and cleaned and cleared and got the green rolling with hundreds of NYPD watching. The only thing we smashed was a piñata in the shape of a bull-dozer. Inside were seeds I had saved from destroyed gardens. They scattered on the opened ground.

UNDER YOUR FEET

A quiet moment in Melrose neighborhood of the South Bronx. It is Luis’ fourth garden, Cabo Rojo. This is one of the poorest congres-sional districts in the U.S. They can’t afford to leave their job for a week, let alone summer in the Hamptons. The neighborhood has the highest rate of asthma in the country. The gardeners saved their blocks from blight. They don’t get awards for all their hard work. They don’t even get notice of demolition. These are the real heroes of the city.

A shock wave. An endless cloud of dust. The financial district burning for months. A new tourist attraction downtown. A new billionaire mayor. A cold winter by the wood stove in the Cabo Rojo encampment. I remember the smell of squash baking in the coals. The garden was destroyed, another death in the family. I watched the kids walking home from school stop in horror. The work crew clearing out the garden was doing “community service” to pay off fines owed the courts.

At the time of this writing [2002] the TRO is about to be lifted. Either the city will sell half of the gardens to a land trust, or City Council legislation will establish a process for community boards to decide their fate one by one. A big shift is under way, and 200-plus gardens definitely will be put at risk. But one

thing is certain: whatever deals they try to swing, people will fight for the land. Now we are connected.

I shared a meal with the Movimento Sem Terra in the countryside of Brazil. I slept with eco-warriors in the high canopy of an old-growth forest. I joined in a sweat lodge at an occupation with the American Indian Movement. I sat in a circle and decided together with my friends that we would not obey. Luis began his fifth garden. We are dreaming the same dream.

The humble story of stones returning to the ground. A family growing their food, and growing with their food. This is a quiet rev-olution. The soil churns. And lead turns to gold in a sunflower. Simple alchemy of days. Because there is no such thing as “nature.” It is always under your feet.

[Originally written in 2001 and updated in 2002, this was first published in *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism.*]



Brad Will and friends in El Jardín de la Esperanza.



# reviews

FILM

## Clueless in Africa

THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND (2006)  
DIRECTED BY KEVIN MACDONALD

When Forest Whitaker first appeared on the screen as none other than Idi Amin I laughed to myself. I wondered how a Hollywood actor could tap into the emotional depths of a megalomaniacal genocidal dictator in postcolonial Uganda. I was surprised to learn that he had indeed accessed a giddy, maniacal evil that made his performance eerily compelling. I did not suspect, however, that his character resembled the real Idi Amin until old newsreels were shown. Not only does he look a bit like him, he also somehow managed to reproduce the sinister glint in the man's eyes.

Though Whitaker's performance is the most talked about element of this film, Idi Amin's fictitious personal physician is the protagonist. James McAvoy plays a clueless young Scotsman just out of medical school who literally spins a globe and chooses Uganda as a destination at random. At first the young man goes to a village ostensibly to help the poor, but he quickly befriends Idi Amin and is brought into the glamorous life of the richest of the rich in a country full of the poorest of the poor. He sips cocktails lounging in front of the pool, ogles beautiful women with scary 1970s eye shadow, and somehow convinces himself that Idi Amin is a true friend.

He doesn't have a clue about African politics and, as a viewer, neither do you. The film reduces the incredibly complex political context to a few statistics and inner-circle political intrigue. It could leave you with the belief that 300,000 Ugandans were slaughtered because Africa is just one messed-up place. However, I believe that the writer intended just the opposite. Mid-film, the physician tells a British intelligence agent that one must have different standards for human rights in Africa, that it is a place



GINO BARZIZZA

where problems need to be solved with violence. By this time, one knows to distrust this character's views. His comment gets to the heart of the story. Originally a Scottish novel, the film is more a critique of the notion of "the White Man's Burden," than a treatise on Uganda politics.

As it finally dawns on him that his buddy Mr. Amin is committing genocide with his help, McAvoy does a great job of bringing his character's internal anguish to the screen, along with the requisite run-for-your-life Hollywood thriller suspense. He plays a believable, well-meaning, gin-sipping, blue-eyed devil.

The poolside party scenes are eerily reminiscent of Berlin in the late 1930s. It made me wonder if someday there will be similar films about us. Will movies show New Yorkers drinking \$15 martinis as U.S. troops kill Iraqi civilians by the thousands? This film shows the incredible ingenuity humans use to lie to themselves about the part they play in this scary world, especially if they are busy having a good time.

—LEILA BINDER

BOOKS

## Mob Rule

MOBSTERS, UNIONS, AND FEDS: THE MAFIA AND THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT (2006)

BY JAMES B. JACOBS  
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS

From Jimmy Hoffa to the building trades in New York City, the Mafia built its power base in the labor movement, using union funds and industry clout to fatten themselves at the workers' expense. In *Mobsters, Unions, and Feds*, NYU professor James Jacobs examines how RICO anti-racketeering laws and trusteeships of unions can turn corrupt unions into functioning bodies. While many romanticize the Cosa Nostra, Jacobs takes away that mystique with case histories of various unions in which workers always lose out. One of the most common rackets are sweetheart deals between corrupt union officials and management. Here's how they work: Mafia members or their associates in control of the union laxly enforce the contract and allow non-union workers to earn less on the job. The mobbed-up labor officials receive kickbacks and the bosses maximize profits by paying below the union standard. In other cases, the mob just robs health and

BORAT: CULTURAL LEARNINGS OF AMERICA FOR MAKE BENEFIT GLORIOUS NATION OF KAZAKHSTAN

DIRECTED BY LARRY CHARLES, STARRING SACHA BARON COHEN  
WIDE RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 3, 2006

FILM

## The Fake is Real

After ten years of various incarnations on British television and on HBO's *Da Ali G Show*, Borat Sagdiyev, the lusty Kazakhstani television reporter, stars in his own feature film, *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*.

British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen gives us a scathing mockumentary as Borat and his plump producer Azamat go to the United States on assignment from the Kazakh Ministry of Information to "learn lessons" that will be useful to their home country. Once he gets to America, Borat discovers a new mission: driving cross-country in an ice cream truck to make Pamela Anderson his wife.

The best and worst thing about *Borat* is that most of the interactions are unstaged. This makes for some hilarious hijacked sequences that will be no surprise to fans of *Da Ali G Show*. But misogyny, anti-Semitism, class and race issues make frequent appearances, presented alongside some ingenious physical gags.

High society, ghettos and rodeos all receive Borat with different levels of enthusiasm. When Borat goes into a gun shop and asks, "Which gun would be best to shoot the Jews?" the man behind the counter doesn't miss a beat, recommending a 9-mm handgun. It's funny because Borat is fake, awful because the store owner's response is real.

Borat is not for those who are easily offended, but for audiences who enjoy fighting fire with fire, the movie offers some of the sharpest satire in recent film. You'll laugh, you'll flinch, and you'll wonder how so many people could say such dumb things to an enthusiastic foreigner in a tattered gray suit.

This is a great movie to see in theaters, not just for the experience of laughing wildly together with strangers, but also because, as Borat's Myspace page declares, "Please you come see November 3. If movie not success, I will be execute." Hard to argue with that, isn't it?

—ERICA PATINO



believes trusteeships are the best bet to rid the mob from the labor movement. Such systematic measures, however, do not adequately address strongman corruption. Should we believe that no one at the New York City Central Labor Council knew about Brian McLaughlin's thievery? Or perhaps the same tactics mob chiefs use to instill fear in the membership were used by McLaughlin.

—BENNETT BAUMER

THEATER

## Rachel Speaks

MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIE  
MINETTA LANE THEATER  
DIRECTED BY ALAN RICKMAN

*My Name is Rachel Corrie* is finally back in town after eight months of censorship that kept the story of the pro-Palestinian U.S. activist out of the New York Theatre Workshop.

The play is now showing at the Minetta Lane Theater — a tiny production space that might have felt claustrophobic had Rachel's spirit not loomed so large over the sparsely decorated stage. Crumbling concrete and a cheerfully disorganized bedroom make up the entire minimalist set as the play follows the flow of Rachel's thoughts, bouncing from anecdotes about her rebellious ex-boyfriend and "neo-





TEMPTING FAITH: AN INSIDE STORY  
OF POLITICAL SEDUCTION  
BY DAVID KUO  
FREE PRESS (OCTOBER 16, 2006)

BOOKS

# Illusions of a Believer

**T***empting Faith* is the story of a devout Christian who tried to put his ideals into action in the Bush administration's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. As disillusioned evangelical voters weigh their allegiance to the Republican Party in this year's mid-term elections, the book also reads as a parable for what happens to decent people when they go to Washington.

David Kuo, the bass-fishing son of a Chinese immigrant, landed his first major political gig at age 24 as an aide for William Bennett. "I was in awe," he writes. Anyone familiar with Bennett's gambling addiction or his vindictive leadership of the "War on Drugs" during the Reagan years would be amazed that Kuo was so enthusiastic about working for him.

There are moving moments in *Tempting Faith* in which Kuo's commitment to uplifting the poor is painfully clear, painful because he then goes on to outline how his faith and the faith of those around him were used by the Bush administration for political gain. Kuo is a tragic character: We want him to do the right thing, but he keeps falling in with the wrong crowd. In short, he is naïve, or has at least acted naïvely.

Tapped in 2003 to be deputy director of the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, he coined the term "Compassion in Action" to describe compassionate conservatism and the thrust of his office. Kuo's work centered around the Charity Aid, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act, which sought to increase funding for faith-based groups that provide social services. However, as social services are of little interest to Bush's religious backers, Kuo found only minimal congressional support despite months of pushing for his legislation.

Kuo writes, "A senior leadership staff member was the clearest: 'Forget about the 'f\*#\$ing CARE Act.'"

Kuo pressed on and helped organize conferences in key swing districts. The conferences sought to educate small faith-based groups on how to obtain government funding. These conferences had the potential to lure community groups with people-of-color constituencies into the Republican fold and were supported by Karl

Rove, Bush's top political strategist.

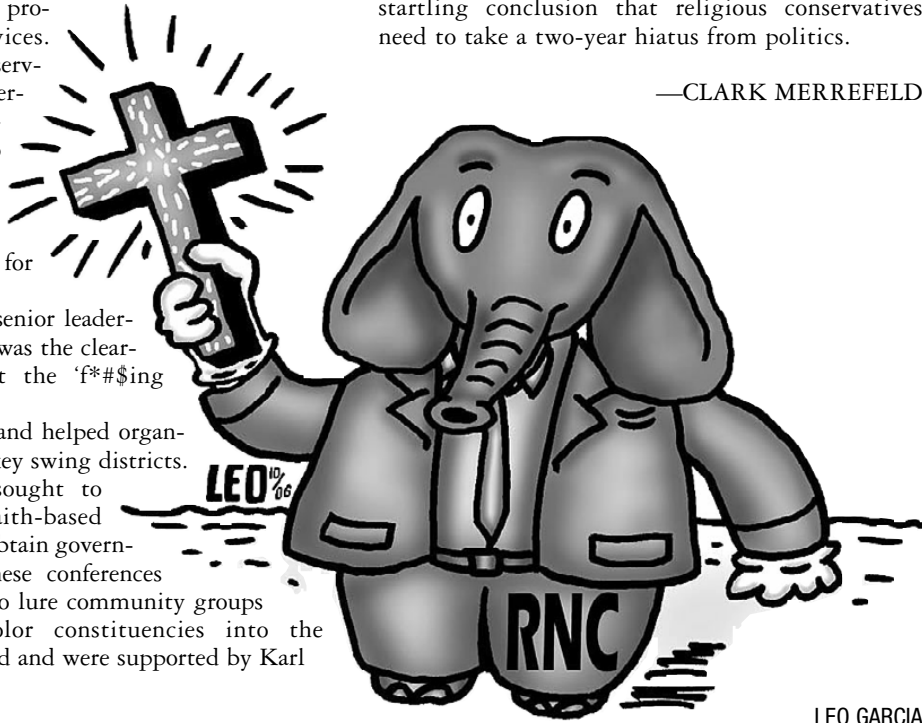
However, funding for these groups dropped to \$30 million per year, down from the \$200 million promised. Kuo eventually resigned in December 2003 when it dawned on him that the Bush administration was backing these conferences solely for political advantage. Upon his exit, Kuo expressed his viewpoint in a forceful way for the first time:

"I turned in my badge and on my way out did the customary thing by delivering my resignation letter to Andy Card. He accepted it, shook my hand, thanked me for all I'd done, wished me well on my future and health, and asked me if I had any thoughts on how the White House could improve. I had been through too much not to say something...The president had made great promises but they hadn't been delivered on. Worse than that, the White House hadn't tried... 'And finally, sir, this thought. I don't know if you are aware of this, but your staff frequently refers to faith-based initiative as the 'f\*#\$ing faith-based initiative.' That doesn't help."

Nonetheless, Kuo goes on to defend the character of the Machiavellian politicians who bamboozled him. "Did [President Bush] ever care about his antipoverty agenda? Personally, I doubt he could have cared more." Karl Rove, Kuo says is, "a peerless political operative with a soft heart."

Despite Kuo's naïvete, *Tempting Faith* is intriguing because of its discussion of Christianity as a political tool in the Bush administration, and Kuo's startling conclusion that religious conservatives need to take a two-year hiatus from politics.

—CLARK MERREFELD



liberal" father to tearful descriptions of Palestinian suffering.

The real Rachel was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer, but the actress Megan Dodds takes us well beyond the newspaper headlines, weaving excerpts from the student activist's emails and diary entries into a 90-minute monologue.

Rachel leaves the quiet streets of Olympia, WA for bullet-riddled Rafah in the Gaza Strip, where she joins other young idealists on a relief mission to save Palestinian homes from destruction. She sees Israeli checkpoints and beatings and the destruction

of greenhouses for what they are — cruel, misguided government policies. She learns to separate Jews as a people from the abuses carried out by the Israeli army, but her sympathies ultimately lie with the weary and frustrated citizens of Rafah, who continue to suffer the consequences of the occupation today.

Last February, in what many consider an act of censorship, the New York Theatre Workshop gave in to supporters of Israel when they cancelled the first run of the play. The group told *Democracy Now!* that "Ariel Sharon's illness and the elec-

tion of Hamas," had prompted their decision.

But controversial political views are only one part of the story; Rachel was remarkable not just because she joined the struggle of an oppressed people, but because she managed to transcend her roots as a privileged white American. Most progressive upper-class youths lament global oppression from the comfort of their parents' McMansions, but Rachel translated coffee-table conversation into action. She died doing what she loved.

—LIANA GREY

MUSIC

# Klezmer Bluegrass

ANDY STATMAN

**A**ndy Statman says that "On one level, playing music just happens and is something I can't control. On another, my experience with the music opens up and plays itself."

This isn't a surprising admission. Statman is a vigorous bluegrass mandolinist, klezmer clarinetist, and much-heralded sensation in both worlds. A stubbornly small-audience artist, Statman is as spiritual as the music he plays that "guides everything that happens."

Loose-limbed in motion with a fluid swagger in notes, Statman plays so excitedly that he nearly causes the black-cloth kippah to tip off his head. Congregation Derech Amuno, or the Charles Street Synagogue, in Greenwich Village hosts the Andy Statman Trio twice a week.

The band, Statman on clarinet and mandolin, Jim Whitney on bass, Larry Eagle on drums and percussion, makes music that is stacked with down-home goodness, appropriately served with shots of scotch and bourbon on the side. All members carry different channels of charisma. Statman murmurs a low drone over his melody lines, Jim sways and power-kicks sometimes, and Larry rummages in his bag of tricks for unpredictable tools of the trade: chump change, spring drums, bells.

The Andy Statman Trio is not aloof, excessive or crowd-pleasing. What makes them cool is that they play solely for the sake of chasing a journey of music. Spiritually elevating in rapid escalation and steered velocity, the Andy Statman trio thrills with versatility, virtuosity and sophisticated storytelling. They need only each other's skills to create moving dreamscapes of macabre and joy.

Statman straddles the role of

insider as a klezmer musician and role of outsider as a master of another native language with a ripe, robust history: Americana bluegrass. His sound is the collision of two music genres linked in a mission to constantly revive and rediscover. A New York native and first-generation American, Statman comes from a long line of cantors and professional musicians. At the same time, Statman grew up absorbed in Earl Scruggs, Lester Flatt, obsessed with West Virginia shortwave radio and as a teenager sweet-talked his way into New Jersey and Pennsylvania bars to hear tunes. Later, Statman earned a brief stint in Nashville and returned in zealous stride. His influences include mandolinist Bill Monroe, fiddler Vassar Clemens, Peter Wernick, John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk.

Statman is evasive about his authority as a practically peerless musician. He was pivotal in the progressive bluegrass movement of the 1970's as founding member of the Newgrass collective "Country Cooking," and collaborated with greats like Ricky Skaggs, Bela Fleck and David Grisman. He is also a primary luminary of klezmer's revival, as a pupil-turned-protégé of Dave Tarras, who bequeathed prized instruments to Statman. Statman's hunt for heritage led to a collaboration with Itzhak Perlman and the Klezmer Orchestra.

Statman is as defensive and self-wielding as homegrown musicians come. By learning to hide from plain sight of anything commercial, Statman has set himself up for what may seem like a grim, obscure career. Instead, Statman has done something intriguingly radical. By sticking to his artistic integrity, he's made his own sell-out story cease to exist. This is a minor detail that Statman sacrifices for sheer satisfaction of playing music wherever, whenever, and as much as he can. The result is that Statman's music is gifted, joyous, humble and highly revered. For these reasons alone, the illuminating Statman truly is one of his kind.

—KAREN FU

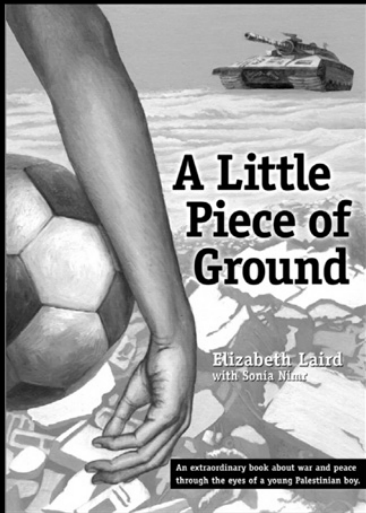






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At a vigil for Brad Will outside Mexican consulate in New York, October 28.

PHOTO: ERIN SIEGAL

## Remembrance

*continued from page 7*

When an American dies in a conflict, then it's news: the murder of four American nuns in El Salvador, Benjamin Linder's killing at the hands of the contras in Nicaragua and Rachel Corrie's death by an Israeli bulldozer.

I thought about this when I heard that Brad Will had been killed at the barricades in Oaxaca. Seeing the first mainstream notice, a Reuters article, I knew the drill. Suddenly the news would take notice of a five-month-old struggle that it has hitherto shrugged off. An American, a journalist, a New Yorker, Brad in death gave the conflict significance where it didn't need any.

The media are our collective eyes. When and how they cover an event can change history. The Western media love mass uprisings, at least when they imperil official enemies: Venezuela, Lebanon and Ukraine, for instance. But when the resistance isn't coming from the elite, serving U.S. foreign policy or backed by the CIA, silence ensues.

Similar mass uprisings in Latin America, full of life, creativity and conflict, offer all the elements of a compelling story but receive minimal attention from the corporate press.

It is into these events that North Americans like Brad interject themselves, as reporters, witnesses and solidarity activists. They don't have a billion-dollar corporation behind them, but many still pro-

duce stellar reporting. And occasionally, some become the story.

The irony of Brad's death, like Rachel's and others, is that the world suddenly notices their reporting and the deaths of those around them that would have passed otherwise as a number: three killed here, 20 killed there, a hundred somewhere else.

I knew Brad only peripherally, but in 24 hours I learned more about his life than in the five years since I met him. There is now a burst of

intensely anguished family as they mourned coffinside. But that's it.

The problem is magnified when there is no personal connection. For too many, myself included, we may oppose empire but those who die by the U.S. government's actions remain an abstraction.

How can we comprehend the deaths of 650,000 Iraqis? Through story-telling, which allows us to understand the world in a way that no political tract or philosophical tome can. Hearing the mundane and extraordinary details of people's lives creates connections where there were none.

Yet in many parts of the world we lack access to such memories. Public remembrance is often a privilege. Families in Nepal often don't have a single photo to remember lost ones. In Afghanistan many must grieve in secret because it's too dangerous to mourn a relative who died fighting Western forces. In Iraq thousands of families don't even know if a loved one is dead and may never even find the body.

The power of the media is its ability to create public memory by choosing which stories to tell. It is a political act. Brad was motivated to tell the stories of those who would otherwise be forgotten. In turn, others are now telling stories not just of who Brad was but the struggles he witnessed, reported on and supported.

It's important that we seek out the stories of others as well, those we don't know, in order to understand both the individual loss and the collective loss they represent. It is the essence of the solidarity Brad and many others have given their lives for.

The irony of Brad's death, like Rachel's and others, is that the world suddenly notices their reporting and the deaths of those around them that would have passed otherwise as a number.

remembrance of Brad from his comrades and colleagues. But I wonder if there will be any attempt to tell the stories of the others who have died in Oaxaca over the last five months.

I would have paid little attention to the deaths of Emilio Alonso Fabian and Esteban Lopez Zurita had they not also been felled by government bullets the same day as Brad in Oaxaca. Yet I know almost nothing about them. I read Emilio was a teacher and saw photos of his

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